



AI Generated

Writing For Mass Communications (Part 8)

A Guide to Self-Analysis of Packages

By

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You can read the first part of this series about ‘writing for mass communications’ [here](#), the second part [here](#), the third part [here](#), the fourth part [here](#), the fifth part [here](#), the sixth part [here](#), and the seventh part [here](#). The points I’m sharing are from seminars I taught for radio and television news departments during my career as a news manager. The following is from a manual I wrote about 40 years ago.

The purpose of this particular news seminar was to get journalists to self-analyze. Too many reporters depend on managers to tell them what to do, then are surprised when their stories are not interesting. I believed strongly during my career in journalism (and still do) that it was my responsibility as a reporter to ask myself some tough questions about each story I covered. Here are several of those questions. I highly recommend today's journalists do the same.

I also recommend that anyone working in various fields of 'mass communications' consider these points. I used them as a corporate communications director after retiring from television news, so I know you can use them too.

Relevance

- Does anybody care?
- Who does it affect?
- How does it affect them?
- How do I capture the experience, the most important facts, and the emotion?
- Will viewers remember my story?

Reporting

- Do I understand the assignment?
- Do I have adequate background?
- Am I prepared to ask intelligent questions that will evoke reactions?
- Have I developed a plan to focus the story on the people it affects, rather than on officials?
- Have I identified what is really new and am I keying on that?
- Am I accurate?
- Am I being fair?
- Does the story demand balancing comment or information?
- Have I thought about a libel risk?
- Will I use a standup?
- If I do, will it be involved and a natural part of the story?

Shooting

- Do I have a plan that will enable the camera to tell the story?
- Do I have a purpose for every shot?
- Am I going after the most compelling pictures rather than lazy shots?
- Have I thought of different angles?
- Have I shot sequences, cutaways, transitions, establishers, CLOSEUPS?
- Am I getting natural sound?
- Did I use a tripod whenever possible?
- Is my video color balanced, in focus, properly lit, properly exposed?

Writing

- Am I writing this as a VISUAL experience?
- Do the words match the pictures?
- Am I telling the story through the EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE?
- Am I using simple sentences and active voice?
- Am I writing like I talk?
- Am I using as few words as possible?
- Does this story have a beginning, middle, and an end?
- Is it understandable to someone who knows nothing about it?
- Will people remember my story?

Production

- Am I using VIDEO STORY-TELLING — Visual lead, sequences, matched action, short sound bites, natural sound, silence?
- Have I used the best shots and sound bites to make the piece compelling, understandable, people-oriented, MEMORABLE?
- Does it need pre-production?
- Are the narration-audio SOT's and NAT-SOT's properly balanced?

Communication

- Am I communicating clearly and actively with the assignment editor and producer about what the assignment is, how the story may have changed once I got into the field, and how I propose to produce the piece?

Follow-Up

- Have I thought of a follow-up, spinoff, or tie-in possibilities for this story and discussed them with the assignment desk?
- Have I left a copy of the script with a follow-up date marked for the assignment desk?

Next Time

Part nine of “Writing for Mass Communications” — *Good Writing Is Rewriting.*